



Actor Steve Guttenberg (right) welcomes Loren Hotels President Jim Finch to Atlanta.

AH&MA Convention Stresses Environmental Issues

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promote environmentalism in hotels.*

The AH&MA surpassed its \$6 million goal for the Hospitality 2000 Campaign to underwrite Educational Institute programs and scholarships with the donation of \$750,000 by American Express and through late donations by several hotel companies—reaching \$6.1 million.

The AH&MA also announced its Partner Program to recognize industry leaders who support it in its programs and materials. With the future of the industry in mind, the "Good Earthkeeping" program was introduced by members of the AH&MA Environmental Committee, an initiative in which cards are for sale at hotels to alert guests that they can opt to keep the same bed sheets and bath towels during their stay, allowing the hotel to conserve water used for laundry. The program also provides a "green" workbook for hotels to encourage the use of other practices, such as recycling, energy conservation and waste reduction. A 30-minute educational video by the AH&MA was created to support both efforts.

Coleval International cards with a heart-shaped earth logo on them invite guests to place the cards on their pillows to decline the changing of sheets and to hang on towel racks to retain used towels in the rooms so that the hotels will note their wishes. The "Environmental Action Pack for Hotels," funded by the Disney Corp., gives hoteliers a host of ideas for making their properties more environmental—sensitive—an approach that will save the hotel money while instilling goodwill with guests, according to Dan Ibarow, president of Palm Hospitality Company and chairman of the AH&MA Environmental Committee.

Ken Hirte, AH&MA president/CEO, said that similar to electronic check-in and other advances, the Good Earthkeeping program addresses the future of the industry and what the majority of guests will want.

Todd Saunders, president of Ecological Solutions and an advisor to the Saunders Hotel Group, said that the Good Earthkeeping program will appeal to guests who are looking for environmentally-conscious businesses to patronize.

"We don't measure individual transfers, but we have measured for a number of years the impact that it's made on meeting planners and it definitely differentiates the hotel from others when all else is equal," Saunders said.

The initiative is expected to potentially save a tremendous amount of water and energy, not to mention labor costs for time spent on changing bed sheets once hotels nationwide implement it. Cards offered by the AH&MA, at a nominal cost will be printed in five languages.

Gloria Williams, chairman of the AH&MA, said that in the year that her company, Inter-Western Management, has been using a similar water conservation program, he has seen "amazingly few requests" to change sheets or towels.

The AH&MA video features four hotels that use environmental programs: the Best Western Space Shuttle Inn, Titusville, FL; The Westin Hotel Seattle; Disney's Wilderness Lodge, Lake Buena Vista, FL; and the Saunders Hotel Group in Boston.

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